

*Contributed by  
James Sheldon to J. A. Sheldon  
No 69 Wall Street,  
New York City.*

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## AN ORATION

DELIVERED ON THE

THE SEVENTY-SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN  
INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 5th, 1852.

BEFORE THE CITIZENS OF BUFFALO.

BY

JAMES SHELDON.

BUFFALO:

STEAM PRESS OF JEWETT, THOMAS & CO

1852.



AN  
ORATION

DELIVERED

BEFORE THE CITIZENS OF BUFFALO,

July 5th, 1852,

BY

JAMES SHELDON.

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Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable.—WEBSTER.

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BUFFALO:  
STEAM PRESS, JEWETT, THOMAS & CO.

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1852.

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J. Sheldon Jr.

12th/06

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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BUFFALO, July 7, 1852.

JAMES SHELDON, Esq.:

DEAR SIR: At a meeting of the Committee of Arrangements for the Fourth of July Celebration, held last evening, it was resolved unanimously, to extend our thanks to you, for the able and dignified oration delivered on the occasion of our National Anniversary, by you—embodying principles, liberal, and compatible with the spirit of our national code.

And we respectfully request you to favor us with a copy of the oration, for publication.

Very respectfully, we remain,

G. A. SCROGGS,  
WM. CARLAND,  
JAMES SMITH,  
OTIS VAUGHN,  
JOHN B. COLLINS,  
P. DORSILEIMER.

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BUFFALO, July 10, 1852.

GENTLEMEN:—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, requesting a copy of the oration delivered by me on the late Anniversary of our National Independence, for publication. Allow me to convey to you my thanks for the sentiments you are pleased to express concerning an humble effort, prepared amid other duties and avocations. And in placing the manuscript at your disposal, I accompany it with a fervent hope that American republicanism may never fail in having abler advocates, and that the spirit of our institutions, in the broadest and most catholic sense, may ever be appreciated by our citizens.

I am, gentlemen, your humble servant,

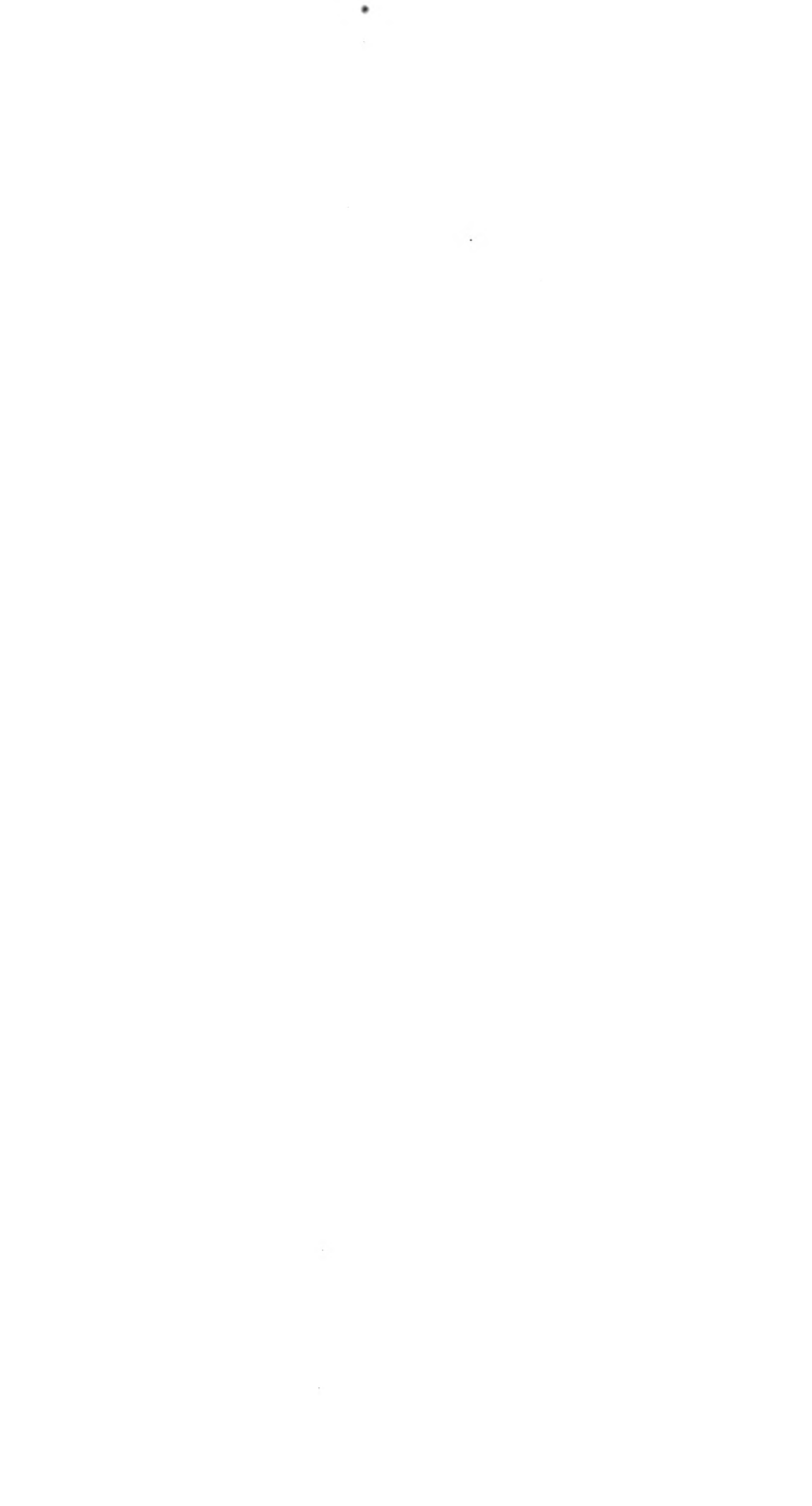
JAS. SHELDON.

Messrs. G. A. SCROGGS,

WM. CARLAND,

JAMES SMITH,

And others, Committee, &c.



## O R A T I O N.

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CITIZENS :

Again, has the birthday of our liberty dawned upon us. Again, we are permitted to behold the glad return of the Sabbath day of freedom. A joyful hymn of praise and thanksgiving arises from every vale in our extended land. The anthem is swelling from a million tongues; a million hearts beat proudly as its echoing tones proclaim the Jubilee of our Independence. We come up to the nation's high and holy festival with the songs of exultation, our bosoms thrill with the influences of the consecrated day, our souls are animated by the inspiring spirit that is borne along on every rising breeze, and we congregate beneath the eternal dome of heaven, around the altars of our freedom, and amid the institutions of our love, to light anew in our hearts the sacred flame, that the watch-fires of liberty may never cease to burn. Our oblations are not offered to decorate a monarch's shrine, we render no homage to the majesty of kings; but we commemorate that day when the rights of man were declared before the world, when rational liberty was proclaimed upon a regenerated earth, and tyranny trembled on its thrones.

How grateful our remembrances! how heartfelt our congratulations! how earnest and confident our hopes! how pure the sources of our pride, and the fountains of our patriotic triumph!

Let us not be forgetful of our forefathers—and their deeds of greatness, that illustrate and ennoble human nature; let us

think of the virtues and wisdom of those men of old, who were sage in council, and powerful in battle — who trusted in the mighty hand and the stretched out arm of the Lord of Hosts. Let us call to mind the days of the struggle for our independence, and the events that adorn the page of history with bright and unfading lustre. Let us speak of that wonderful political change — that new organization and development of human society that attracted the attention of all mankind, and laid the foundation of a new order of things, and caused new principles of government to be recognized by the powers of earth. Behold the physical and moral effects of that revolution! See mankind awakening to a just appreciation of their rights and dignity, and trace the operations of the spirit that was then breathed into life and activity, so full of consequences, so glorious in results to all the world! Citizens: let us think of all these things with grateful hearts, with emotions of pride, and cheerful hopes for the duration and prosperity of the Republic.

Seventy-six years ago, our fathers were assembled in solemn council, to deliberate upon the fate and fortune of their country. It was no common occasion, such as occurs in the ordinary history of nations, that had called together the representatives of three millions of people, to think, to decide, to act for the present and the future of their land. They knew how momentous were the interests involved in the determination of that day, and how important and almost decisive the influence of their actions upon the destiny of all that was dear to them of principle and human rights. No spirit of wild enthusiasm inflamed their souls, no visionary dreams distorted the imagination; they were calm in spirit, and collected in reason, and moved only by the silent, inward force and majesty of judgment, and the mighty will.

The weak and humble Colonies had always been bound in



an alliance unnatural to the dignity of man, neither respected as friends or protected as allies; their petitions answered only by neglectful silence; their prerogatives disregarded, and actual burdens of oppression imposed; and now they were still commanded to yield tribute and allegiance, and submit to the requirements of the monarch of the British throne, whose fleets and armies were thundering upon their defenceless shores. The first blood of the Revolution had been spilled at Bunker Hill, and stained the fields of Concord and Lexington. War—actual war—existed between the Colonies and England, and it was idle to talk of peace, without abject submission. The eyes of the world were upon them. The old governments were hoping that the outbreak of the spirit of liberty was but a transient ebullition—that it would be crushed by the strong arm of power; but good men, in every land, breathed an earnest invocation that the struggle would be crowned by glorious success.

What a solemn responsibility in that hour was their's, as they were then gathered—the leaders, the great and wise men of the nation! How eloquent the unspoken language of their hearts, how firm and fearless in spirit, how animated in soul by noble and patriotic purposes! Had they hesitated, had they trembled, lest they were rashly overstepping the bounds of ordinary prudence, had they been overcome by fear of the mighty power of England, it had been the darkest day in the world's history. Should they boldly proclaim their rights as men, and avow the causes that impelled them to such honorable action, they would, perhaps, ensure the accomplishment of the greatest political revolution of modern times. They shrunk not from that responsibility; and asserting their liberties before the world, declared the independence of their country, and, pledging their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to support that declaration, defied the hosts of the

invader. Americans hailed the tidings of that event with the joyful enthusiasm of earnest and devoted souls, and celebrated it with bonfires and illuminations, and the fervent thanksgiving of their hearts; and the light that was here kindled radiated from our shores, and illuminated Europe. Bold and brave men from foreign lands came hither to aid us in our weakness, and peril their lives for our independence. La Fayette, and Steuben, and Pulaski, and others, whose memories will never fade, came from their native lands and gathered undying laurels on the battle fields, in the crusade for freedom. Heart to heart, and hand to hand, our forefathers went out to the contest; and then came the long struggle, the dark days, the patient sufferings, the glorious victories, and the final successful termination of the Revolution. The Colonies had gained their liberties, the Federal Constitution was established, and a government founded by our heroes and sages, under the fostering care of Heaven, that has become the pride and hope of the world.

Well is it, Americans, that we congregate this day to dwell amid such recollections, and rejoice that the sun is yet beaming upon these glorious results of the labors of our forefathers, these enduring institutions that expand and grow brighter and firmer in all the circling years. Ye gather from your peaceful homes, from the marts of traffic, and the scenes of toil, to exchange the salutations of your hearts. Ye bear aloft the banner of your civic associations; ye are arrayed in the symbols of your craft, the decorations and devices of your orders, and the insignia of fraternal brotherhood. The venerable forms of aged men are here; they feel anew the enthusiasm of the times of old. The young men are here, and the life-blood is purely bounding through their veins, as they catch the inspiration of the hour. The matron and the blooming maiden are here; they will ever be the last and the most fervent worshipers in the temples of religion and liberty. Ye assemble

in the spirit of love and friendship, animated by the same influences, cherishing the same hopes, all equally Americans, all equally enjoying the benign effects of constitutional freedom; and may those who shall come after us, in the unnumbered centuries of time, who shall stand where we now stand, and worship where we now worship, may they never be forgetful, may their hearts never be hardened, may they ever gratefully feel the gentle influences borne from the silent spirit-land of the mighty past.

At the conclusion of the American Revolution, the thirteen united Colonies, to be sure, were independent of the world, and they soon established our federal government and existing constitution, yet they were weak and feeble in the elements of physical power. The long and unequal contest had drained the public treasury and impoverished the whole country by ruining trade and commerce, and there was no stability or sense of security attending those ordinary transactions of life which open great avenues to wealth and power, and develop the resources and capacities of a nation. The government itself was but an experiment, and fear and doubt attended every movement, and at times almost obstructed its practical operation. But there were bright hopes in the hearts of strong men, and a buoyant spirit of confidence which gradually rose above the depression incident to a new and untried order of things; and silently though slowly the current of public and private affairs became tranquil and began to flow in legitimate and well defined channels. American enterprise opened new avenues for trade and new fields for exertion, while the citizens found their rights protected and their interests fostered by the benign operations of government.

The world soon discovered the beneficial change that was here taking place, sensibly feeling the influence of our free institutions and directed its attention to our land, and thousands

of those who sought for freedom and a home where right was loved and wrong rebuked, came to our shores to find a welcome and a sanctuary. The march of improvement was onward and irresistible; the primeval forests were opened by the hardy pioneers; our commerce began to expand and visit every sea; science and the arts soon found their votaries, and the humanities of life enlightened and informed the intellect and heart, and men moved vigorously and confidently onward in the march to wealth and power and prosperity. We have but to look around us to behold and realize the extent of our physical improvement. Where but lately the unpruned forests in native beauty grew, we see the flourishing homes of industry and happiness, and in place of the rude habitation of the Indian, our lofty cities stand along the vales, lifting their domes to heaven. The white man has been through the length and breadth of the land, and all has changed before his improving care, save Nature, where she dwells in her fastnesses. The same blue lake is near us at our feet, and the eternal cataract still thunders on our borders; but the wild wood has become a paradise, and the very home of the red man is the centre of the commerce of the west.

But it is not in our physical condition alone that this change is manifest, nor in that alone can we see the wonderful improvement our country has made in power and happiness and dignity. A moral, and social, and intellectual advancement has taken place that has no parallel in history. Freedom in religion and in doctrine was coeval in its establishment with that of our civil liberty, from which the most beneficial results have flowed, for there has been no strong arm of power to bind the conscience of man, or fetter the soul in its aspirations. The claims of morality have been eminently recognized, and a just appreciation of whatever is good and virtuous and sacred in the offices of life, pervades the whole community, while the holy

men of truth are among us, who go forth to labor in the vineyard and preach the inspiring hopes and promises of the Christian dispensation, untrammled by temporal power. The rights of men as social beings in their connection with each other, of life and liberty and property and the peaceable enjoyment of all these rights, and the majesty of the law, that strong and subtle link in the chain of constituted government, are considered and upheld in opposition to the dictates of passion and arbitrary power. Around us are the institutions of learning; not only those within whose walls we gather to acquire the garnered knowledge of all time, and develope the utmost capacities of intellect, but those prouder monuments, those cherished sources of universal education, the free schools, that rear their humble fronts in every hamlet of the nation. All these, and other evidences of that advancement, these sources of aggrandizement and national character, these elements of our integrity and lasting duration, stand firm before the world, and secure amid all modern innovation, will multiply our blessings and elevate our republic to the loftiest pinnacle of earthly glory.

How wonderful the change! how unlooked for by the wise men of the revolution! how extended and beneficial in its influence upon the whole civilized society of earth! how gratifying to every friend of civil and religious liberty! how full of disappointment and vexation to the tyrants of the old world, who thought to crush the offspring of freedom while yet in the weakness of infancy! It is the world's great change, such as the swaying to and fro of empires never before accomplished. The time had come when a revolution in the existing elements of social order and political government was required to prevent the degeneracy of mankind, and the extinguishment of the desire for equality and the love for liberty, which burns in every human breast. This was the chosen theatre of the struggle; this, the scene of action and of triumph. There is a

time for all things. There was a time when Europe borrowed her arts, her literature, her refinements, her civilization from Asia. Asia, and her glory and grandeur have passed away; and Europe will not forever be enabled to wield the trident of the seas, or sway the sceptre of intellectual superiority. The unshackled genius of the New World is now exerting itself with gigantic vigor, aided by the infinite treasures of nature, to strengthen its powers and develope its unequalled resources. Power, dominion, science, literature, and the arts, hitherto the satellites of despotism, are becoming the bright and beautiful handmaids of a brighter goddess than themselves, and the sceptre will depart from the East and be wielded by the West. Here shall be gathered and centred all the enduring elements and attributes of moral and physical grandeur; and, as our republic moves on amid the march of nations, onward, onward,

“We may take our station,  
Borne on the wings of Fame o’er sea and land,  
And show our glories in the dazzling sun,  
Proclaiming as we go—these, these are the spoils  
The Greeks have taken from the towers of Troy,  
And hung them in the temples of their Gods,  
A blazonry for ages yet to come.” \*

Such anticipations for our republic, are as rational as glorious to Americans. The New World is disenthralled; acknowledging no superior but Heaven, and trusting to that superior for prosperity; and the old governments feel the throb and pulse of liberty beating in every human heart. It arises from the ashes of tyranny and the dust of crumbling thrones, and standing the chiefest among the chief, and leading the way in the bright path of freedom, already has become the beacon, the example, the patriarch of the struggling nations of the earth.

The genius and spirit of American liberty and American republicanism, unlike those of the old republics, extend their

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\* Herald, in the Agamemnon of Æschylus.

grateful and pervading influence over the whole earth. They were singularly jealous of their franchises, and unwilling to extend their privileges to the world, and when they passed the circumscribed boundaries of their own territories, they regarded all others as dependents or allies, whose resources might lawfully be applied to their own aggrandizement, and who could attain to no station higher than that of conquered tributaries. Beyond their own towers, they permitted no extension of the area of freedom, but restrained and curbed every effort and crushed every exertion of those who asserted equality of right, or dared to aspire to independence.

How different with us ; how far are we exalted above such selfish and illiberal policy ! Not only have we erected here an altar of liberty upon which we place the votive offerings of our hearts, but we invite all mankind to come and join us in our sacrifices. We know no distinction among the worshippers of freedom in our land : they are all equally freemen, all citizens, all Americans. More than this, we gird ourselves about with the armor of truth and right, and go forth beyond our own country to crusade for the emancipation of mankind. We would that not only here, but everywhere upon earth, the spirit of liberty might be present, to animate, and inform, and illuminate the world, with the tranquil beams reflected from our shores ; and that the sun, in its daily journey through the arch of heaven, might never cease to shine upon the monuments of freedom. In every quarter of the globe — whether amid the burning sands of Africa, or upon the fertile plains of Europe ; whether on the mountain side or in the glen, or where the green islands gem the ocean foam ; wherever humanity pines in chains, or suffering, or oppression, we carry our sympathies and our tears, offering the balm of our consolation to heal the wounds and soothe the miseries of the afflicted. We tell them of our institutions and our laws, of

peace and happiness and abundance in our young and vigorous land, of the asylum and sacred home we offer to all mankind ; and we address them, we call upon them in the language of affection : Come, ye men of every clime and every nation ; come, in your misery or in your affluence, and fear not to take thought of your future in our land, for it will be well with you. Come with the symbols of your religion and your household gods, for they will be respected. Come to our hearts if you will, and gather with us around our shrines, or worship in our open temples. Come to our joyful homes, whose hearth-stones never echo the wailings wrung out by penury or oppression. Come, garner with us the harvest of plenty, and enjoy the full banquet of peace. Come from every mount and vale and stream where liberty hath no home, and trusting your fortunes upon the wave of ocean, flee unto this broad land of freedom, even as the young bird unto its native hill. Ye are welcome to enjoy with us our privileges, our blessings, our immunities. With eager hands we press to greet you ; we salute you with the voices of welcome, as 'ye touch upon our fraternal shores. Are ye exiles, or wanderers, or broken-hearted ?—this, then, is the holy land of refuge ; this the land of tearful benedictions. In the name of down-trodden and suffering humanity, we bid you earnest welcome ; come, build with us this lofty fabric of our state, and be ye pillars of integrity to support the grandeur of the Commonwealth.

Thus do our words go out into all lands, and unto the ends of the world ; and we rejoice that all the nations are attentive, and that they come in mighty caravans of pilgrims from all climes, to dwell within the chosen sanctuary of freedom.

The present century bears witness to an essential amelioration of all that constitutes human society. We cannot speak broader than this, even though we would ; and it is superfluous to define, when on every side the monuments and



evidences of this assertion testify to its truth. The spirit of the age is eminently progressive. It has induced a wonderful improvement in the social condition of the world, by the assimilation of nations, through the influence of reciprocal interests and mutual dependence, which awaken and cherish feelings of friendship and general amity, and tend to make governments what they were designed to be, the instruments of conferring blessings upon mankind. The dominion of error and force is fading before the illumination of the mind that is witnessed in the later days; and in all enlightened countries, men, no longer bound in soul, or body, or in thought, boldly launch forth with free and unfettered powers to torture invention and exhaust genius, to convert the material things around us into blessings.

Science and art seem almost living agents to make us happier, wiser, and better; they lend their magic powers to triumph over the obstacles of nature, and bring forth discovery upon discovery, until we are almost dazzled by the rapidity with which one improvement succeeds another. Beyond all these, we bear witness to human development as regards the virtues of the heart, the moral improvement, and deep religious feeling, which constitute a glorious triumph in the war of good against evil, which man has waged since creation's day.

It is all substantial, cheering advancement and progress in things physical, and social, and political; and it is all for our good—essentially for human good—and raises us to the proud eminence upon which we stand in our day and generation. We are improving; and what the end of this improvement will be, we know not; but let us wish and hope that it may be for good, and that the future will justify the goodness of the Creator in endowing us with the spark of intelligence.

Ye men of the living present! ye happy generation who

behold this day, the sun in heaven, and look onward to the dazzling future, pause ye amid your exultation, to dwell in memory with the men of the silent past! This day, so welcome in its returning brightness, so full of holy hopes and ennobling aspirations, let us awaken in our minds a grateful remembrance of the strong, and wise, and good men, who were the founders of our happiness; who planted, that not only we, but all posterity, through the undistinguished lapse of time, might reap; who, leaving to us the precious legacy of freedom, now repose among the honored dead. They were sages and patriots in council: of calm, collected will, of high and virtuous resolves, of manly dignity, which elevated them above all emotions of fear of temporal ill, and impelled them not only to declare the natural and imprescriptible rights of man, but to assert and vindicate them before the world. They were heroes and martyrs upon the battle-field of dauntless souls, of firm and unyielding hearts, who were nerved by conscience and principle to go forth to the unequal contest, and pour out the crimson tide, or yield even life itself a cheerful sacrifice upon the altar of liberty. Eminently wise, and brave, and virtuous, how honorable the remembrances we should bestow upon them! how lasting the memorial we should raise to them within our hearts! The contest for our independence was not the waging of battle between contending equals; it was the struggle of the weak against the mighty. To undertake it, amid the doubts and uncertainty which hung over the future, required the exercise of moral and mental powers of the most exalted nature. It involved the dissolution of the dearest and strongest ties that ever bound a colony to the parent land in filial love and obedience, and not only the disowning of all future allegiance, but a bold defiance of all power that would oppose a separate station being taken among the nations of the earth. Yet this was calmly, boldly done — done as

true men who suffer and endure with fortitude should ever do — done with that mighty will and unconquerable spirit which never yields, which formed a distinguishing characteristic of the days of the Revolution.

To persevere in that contest, and carry it on during a succession of years, amid defeat and discouragement, oppressed by poverty and that more dangerous ill, intestine faction, without the physical resources requisite to success, bleeding and naked, and oftentimes destitute of human comforts, with hardly a ray of hope for a successful termination of their labors and perils, required a devotion and self-sacrifice, and an inspiring sentiment of patriotism which the world had never witnessed. But all these ennobling qualities were signally manifested. We see them, men of every rank and fortune, the young and old, forsaking all social and personal happiness to enroll themselves in the ranks of war, consecrating their blood, offering their fortunes, dedicating their energies, exhausting genius and invention, hoping against hope, but ever animated by the sublime consciousness that truth, and justice, and right, though crushed to earth, were attributes of God, and would, eternal, rise. They conquered: our rights were acknowledged, our liberties established; and we enjoy in tranquillity the results of that great moral triumph which is so blessed to us, and, through its pervading influence, to the world.

While we mourn that the waves of time have borne their mortality from earth, we know that their fame will ever burn with immaculate and imperishable honor. We hear some voice from the land of the departed calling unto us, "My sons, my sons, forget not your fathers," and we come forth this day to consider their virtues and venerate their characters, that the land may never want for good and wise men. Not only to them do we give our tributes of respect and unfailing remembrance, but unto those also who have guided the tottering

steps of our republic in its early days, and elevated it to its present dignity and greatness. They, too, have nobly fought the mighty battles for principle and right, upon sea and land, and won the glorious victories of truth, or in the Senate halls or chairs of state have contributed to our national honor and aggrandizement.

The good, they drop around us, one by one,  
Like stars when morning breaks :

and but yesterday, through all the charmed air, was borne the knell of the departed sage and statesman, who was ever the defender of the Constitution, and the unwavering champion of principle ; whose voice of thrilling eloquence was ever raised in behalf of oppressed humanity, and whose fame, circumscribed by no national limits, pervades every land, to the glory and renown of our republic. Ye are mourners for the mighty fallen ; ye mingle your tears with those of millions, as ye join in the funeral obsequies not yet performed ; ye lament for the light that is no more, for the spirit fled — gone, like a sun-beam, to revisit its native skies !\*

To all of these — to all the heroes, and patriots, and sages, who sleep in the valley and shadow of death — let us apply the lofty eulogium pronounced by Pericles over the Athenians slain in their country's cause : “ They have every one received a praise that will never decay, a sepulchre that will always be most illustrious — not that in which their bones lie mouldering, but that in which their fame is preserved, to be on every occasion when honor is the employ of either word or act, eternally remembered. This whole earth is the sepulchre of illustrious men : nor is it the inscription on the columns in their native soil alone that show their merit, but the memorial

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\* HENRY CLAY deceased at Washington, June 29, 1852, and his remains passed through Buffalo July 6th, on the way to his former residence, at Ashland, Ky.

of them, better than all inscriptions, in every foreign nation, repositied more durably in universal remembrance than on their own tomb." \*

Such, Americans, are the characters, and virtues, and events which the history of our own government presents for our contemplation ; our spirits are animated and our hearts rejoiced by the ennobling influences of our national recollections. Why need we bind the pilgrim sandals on our feet, and wander to long-deserted shrines, or sigh o'er storied ruins of the past, to inflame our breasts with lofty sentiments of honor, or patriotism, or love of country ? What charms are found amid the vales of Greece, or by the Roman hills, that we must ever thither turn with unaverted gaze, to seek for great incentives in the dust of by-gone centuries ? We grant that the history of early republics abounds with great and distinguished examples, and glorious events, all honorable to humanity ; and our souls kindle with admiration when we read of Spartan virtues and heroism at the pass of Thermopylæ, or thrill with sympathy in the triumph at Marathon, and we would that such, and such like recollections of any and every age, might exert unceasing influence upon men, and be appealed to, to arouse the noblest and holiest emotions of our nature . They adorn the annals of the centuries in which they were exhibited, and form the peculiar characteristics of the nations of antiquity ; but in the great theatre of life, they were but the opening scenes of that drama of human existence which, since creation's dawn has been portraying the capacities of man for perfection, and that higher and more supreme development of heart, and mind, and soul, in all social, and civil, and religious virtue, that crowns our later days with glory. For all of these, in the most unfolded maturity earth ever

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\* Thucydides, book 2d.

witnessed, we must look to our own times, and to our own land; and, in the moment of exultation and of chastened gratitude, we may well exclaim, in the poet's prophetic language,

"The first four acts already passed,  
A fifth shall close the drama with the day,—  
Time's noblest offspring is the last."

Yes, the spirit and sentiment of rational liberty is present with exalted purity in this final abode of freedom, our altars are yet crimsoned with the blood of our own heroes and martyrs, we wreath fresh chaplets to adorn our venerated shrines, and while we forget not the men of old, while the memory endures of the blood of Bunker Hill, the sufferings of Valley Forge, the triumph of Yorktown, we need not ask for watchwords of more thrilling spell to kindle emotions of the most sublime patriotism and devotion in the hearts of Americans. These are the recollections that must animate, and fortify, and ennoble the spirit of our citizens; they are the foundation of national character, as they are legitimate sources of exultation and confidence within ourselves, and confer upon us that dignity which commands respect and admiration among cotemporary powers. May they be undying fountains of our joy; may their influence be welcomed with holier veneration upon each returning anniversary of freedom; may they stand in the freshness and glory of the present, amid the changes of all time!

As the prosperity and duration of the republic depends more upon our citizens than upon written constitutions or positive law, we might speak of that political education or proper understanding of our institutions and national policy which will enable all men to take such a part in public affairs and in the councils of state, as will be of benefit to themselves and to the

government. By this, is not meant the instruction of youth in politics, as it is generally termed, in this wrangle of partisans which fills the air with tumult, for there is very little of all this that is substantial or necessary to be understood to inform us of our position as members of society, as men and citizens; but we allude now to the implanting in the minds of youth a just appreciation of the manifold blessings of civil independence as demonstrated in our age and country, a desire for peace and order, and a love for liberty, which will make them men—men who are sensible of their natural and inalienable rights and privileges, and who will glory in preserving them. In our country, it is not only the privilege, but it is the duty of every man, to be conversant with the affairs of state. To be uninformed when issues are pending which involve important interests in their determination; to shrink from participating in the councils of the nation; to stand aloof when great questions of public policy are agitated, would seem to indicate a cowardice of soul, or moral weakness, or mental incapacity. Therefore, we speak of political education as a part of the education and discipline of youth, which will instill high resolves, and give birth to noble thoughts, from which, in days of manhood, will arise the feelings of love and reverence for our institutions, and a desire for their perpetuation. Let them contemplate with attention the nature of our system of formal government, and estimate the blessings we enjoy; and as they mature in years, inform them of the duties as well as the rights of citizens—of their civil obligations as members of the great social family, the necessity of obeying laws and supporting constituted authorities,—and then, in all times of peril, or doubt, or of prosperity, they will honor the commonwealth by action, and support her integrity.

Think not, in moments of pride and security, that American republicanism has no need of conservative men and

conservative influences to insure its duration. There exists, from the very spirit of our institutions—from that unbounded license of thought, and speech, and action, which we delight not only in tolerating, but *protecting*—a turbulence among our citizens which naturally results from democracy, and which, if we are unguarded and allow it uncontrolled power, will assuredly resolve our existence into dreadful anarchy. There are, and always have been, in the world's history, men who are libertines in politics, as well as in religion and morality—men, whose natures are impatient of the legal and natural restraints of society, and who are ever ready to seize upon a pretext to resist, or to take up the sword to overthrow, the constituted authorities of government. It is from these pretenders to patriotism who, under the guise of love of country, would seek to fill the places of authority; these libertines, who would even thunder treason at the head of armed bands, could they elevate themselves to power; these demagogues who glory in misleading the populace, and whose existence depends upon the success of their schemes of deception; it is from these, vastly more than from the open enemies of our institutions, that we are to fear for the safety of the republic. Far from being conservators of the public peace and happiness, they delight in attacking whatever is venerable, and cherished among good men. The disorganization of the elements of society, the overthrow of all that the experience and wisdom of man has established as necessary and proper for the maintenance of civil order, is attempted by them, under the pretence of reformation. Reformation, indeed, which, in their hands, would be nothing but wild and senseless republicanism, which would teem with all the misery and evil that socialists, agrarians, and infidels could inflict upon the world. Let us not raise up our voices against innovation and improvement, if satisfied that blessings and benefits can result therefrom; and



far be it from any friend of man to condemn unheard, the wildest scheme that fanaticism ever urged under the plea of reformation, for there exists in the conceptions of speculative reformers many a crude idea or misdirected thought which may be turned to the advantage of the world, when sober reason and the pruning-knife of truth have stripped them of their deformities. But it is against the dangers that result from unauthorized and impetuous innovation upon the quiet of existing things, from this unceasing tampering with our system of social order, from this love of change that endangers all stability, that the watch-cry of our citizens should ring out clear and wide through all the land. Look to it, then, citizens, and behold how important a thing it is to guard by every influence, against the practices of designing men; how sternly you must frown upon the cunning schemes of reformation, the insinuating evils that abound in all that is false and unnatural, and which, though glittering with promise as they appear to the beholder, are, like the mirage of the desert, a mockery and a delusion.

And of that Union to which we owe our power, and character, and dignity, as a distinct people, which was formed by the wisdom, and cemented by the blood of our fathers, and without the existence and continuance of which, in all its fulness and majesty, we can have no hopes for American republicanism, of that Union which we delight to love and reverence, let us take thought as we rebuke all innovation, all change, all the aspirings of modern conceit and modern degeneracy. At the termination of the Revolution, the sovereign states were free to exist distinct and disunited; but good and wise men knew that there was no future for liberty, no hope for the preservation of the principles which had been contended for, save in the formation of that alliance and federation which now exists. They reconciled conflicting interests and discordant

views and feelings, each yielding of its own individuality to create one great, harmonious whole, and our federal government was established, and our republic, then ushered into the great family of nations, began to move onward, "rejoicingly, as a giant, to run its course." We behold, this day, the results, the consequences of that Union; we live to be thankful for the blessings that surround us. The same influences that created it, are present with us, urging us to perpetuate it. Beyond it, we can not, dare not look; we wish not to gaze upon the spectacle of dissevered states—the discordant fragments of our glory. We trust that it may be eternal amid the changes of earth, "that there may be no decay, no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our cities," and though the storms of passion and the whirlwinds of faction and secession may break around it, yet that it may stand firm upon its base, an everlasting temple of liberty.

When the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of Hosts, which the children of Israel brought out of Shiloh in the time of their trouble, was taken in battle by the Philistines, and carried down into Ashdod and into Ekron, the hand of the Almighty was heavy throughout all those cities, and the voices of their lamentation went up to Heaven.\*

Even so, what sacrilegious hand shall dare in after time to spoil us of the **ARK OF OUR CONSTITUTION, THE COVENANT OF OUR LIBERTY**, shall feel the vengeance of the ruler of the world. In Him was the trust of our forefathers reposed, in the days of their struggle with the hosts of the old world, of darkness and oppression. They felt, they knew the right was theirs; that the crusade was for principle, and truth, and liberty, in all that makes society and government the objects of human regard, and their pure and heartfelt prayers and aspirations ascended to the Throne above in humble supplication for guidance and

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\* 1 Samuel, iv.

success. The triumph was accorded ; and we are blessed with happiness and unmeasured prosperity ; and let us, of the living world, gratefully ascribe all honor and reverence, not unto them, not unto them, but unto that great God who directed the past, and bountifully measures out the present, and who, we hope will guard the ark of our freedom in the ages yet to come.

Upon this day, so full of consecrated memories ; so welcome in its ennobling influences ; so bright with hope for all future time ; we may trust that our duration will be eternal. We stand upon the eminence of the present, and look down the vale of years, to picture to our minds the things of the coming centuries of earth ; but how bright or how dark that future will be, we cannot know. Perhaps the changing years will sweep away the evidences of our civilization ; overthrowing the institutions which we now survey with pride — disorganizing society, and wrapping earth in deeper shades of ignorance and mental darkness. If it so be, some high purpose will doubtless be accomplished, which our short-sighted vision cannot comprehend ; but as men of the present, let us do our duty in our own time, and lay broader and deeper the foundations of human perfection and national grandeur. We must leave the result to the men who will come after us, and live and die when we are mingled with the dust. The seed that is now sown with the diligent hand shall bear fruit in God's own time ; but whether of good or evil, we cannot say. We can only hope for the improvement of man through the long succession of ages, and trust in the spirit and integrity of our institutions for our preservation, and we build up that hope and trust upon the evidence of the present. The philanthropist, can only hope for a glorious consummation of his labors in the coming days, the moralist can only hope that his pure

wishes for man's perfection will be realized, the friend of civil liberty can only hope that the spirit of freedom will never cease to be present among the nations. That the swelling buds which we now see upon the tree of life will unfold and blossom in that unknown future, must be the hope and prayer of all.

We know the mutability of all human institutions, and political government is forever changing amid the revolutions of earth ; that the glory of the old nations has faded, and their monuments crumbled into ruin, although their founders built upon what "they deemed, eternal rock." The sacred olive branch borne from Cecropia's towers once symbolized their subjugation to all the tributary isles, and the Roman senate and people inscribed upon their standards the magic letters which proclaimed their own aggrandizement to an allied world, but the Parthenon is mouldering in its desolation, and the Coliseum stands, in gloomy silence, the memorial of departed grandeur. We behold the gigantic wrecks of empires and constitutions which are strewn in terrible desolation upon the great ocean of time, and we are doubtful: we tremble for the future of our republic. Yet we do know the sources of our political integrity and national strength; we know that the system of American government, differing from all the past in important characteristics, is self-balanced and self-sustaining; we know that the foundations of our state are laid in the hearts, and homes, and free spirits of a moral and enlightened people, and cemented by the bonds of love and union. The physical powers of surrounding kingdoms—their fleets, and armies, and resources; constitute the instruments of oppression, or the unstable glories of the conqueror who wheels the iron car of servitude over prostrate nations, and we look not to them to give us hope, we trust not to them to

perpetuate our liberties. Ours, are higher and truer elements of duration, that exist within ourselves, in the unwritten charters and constitutions of our hearts.

Let us appreciate the first fruits of the liberties we enjoy, and cherish this high monument of our forefathers' wisdom with the spirit of enthusiasm and earnest solicitude. The milder virtues must find their dwelling-place within our hearts, and our souls, unchained, be free to feel the buoyant and ennobling influences of freedom. Let us encourage that sense of justice and exalted dignity which has elevated us above the thrones of earth, and given us the chief place among the nations. Let our old men speak of all these things at their firesides to the young, and tell them of their duty to themselves and to their country, that they may never fail her in the time of need, but ever reverence the Constitution. Let our young men who are soon to be called upon the stage of life, hear the voices of their fathers, and gather wisdom and instruction. Let our matrons imbue the hearts of their children with the principles of truth and the love of civil and religious freedom. Let the ministers of holy things remember how important an influence they should exert upon the whole society of the nation, and guide the people in the way of life—morality shall then reign, and the train of virtues, the undying elements of our existence, be ever present, like the day-spring from on high. These are the bulwarks of our strength: the **ARK OF OUR LIBERTY IS OUR CONSTITUTION AND THE BOND OF UNION!** Guard it inviolate, that the empires of the world may not despoil us of our great glory, and carry it away captive down to the homes of their false gods. Then shall we flourish and endure among the nations, and the setting sun when it goes down in heaven, will never gild with its parting beams, the fallen monuments, the departed glories of the great Republic of the Western World.





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